

## Message Text

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ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SY-05 /066 W

----- 039775

O P R 080830Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2088

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: OEXC, PINS, BU

SUBJECT: POLITICAL ASPECTS OF LAPO VISIT TO SOFIA

1. TWO POLITICAL OCCURRENCES TOOK PLACE DURING LAPO SOFIA VISIT WHICH NEED TO BE CALLED ESPECIALLY TO EMBASSY PRAGUE'S AND DEPT'S ATTENTION.

2. FIRST AND MINOR ONE TOOK PLACE DURING UNUSUALLY WELL-ATTENDED PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 6. ASKED WHETHER LAPO WOULD TOUR USSR, MEHTA REPLIED GROUP WOULD HAVE LIKED TO GO BUT RUSSIANS HAD SAID THAT WHILE THEY WANTED THE ORCHESTRA, THEY DID NOT WANT HIM. HE PREFERRED TO SAY NOTHING MORE ABOUT THE MATTER. SOMEONE ASKED WHETHER HIS ASSOCIATION WITH ISRAEL MIGHT HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE MATTER. WELL, SAID MEHTA, THAT WAS WHAT HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED NOT TO SAY. TO WHICH BUSINESS MANAGER FLEISCHMANN ADDED THAT THERE WAS NEVER ANY QUESTION OF LAPO GOING TO USSR WITHOUT ITS MUSICAL DIRECTOR. PRESS CONFERENCE, WHICH HAD LASTED ABOUT HALF AN HOUR, ENDED SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

3. MORE IMPORTANT HAPPENING TOOK PLACE DURING INTERMISSION AT  
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LAPO'S FINAL PERFORMANCE DECEMBER 7. STREET AREA OUTSIDE BACKSTAGE

ENTRANCE WAS THROGGED WITH STUDENTS AND OTHERS WHO HAD BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN TICKETS. (FEW TICKETS HAD ACTUALLY BEEN PLACED ON SALE; MOST HAD BEEN ALLOTTED BY GOB THROUGH UNIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.) CONVERSATIONS WERE STRUCK UP BETWEEN THOSE OUTSIDE THE OPEN DOOR AND MUSICIANS INSIDE. MUSICIANS INVITED STUDENTS TO ENTER AND WATCH CONCERT FROM WINGS OR BACK OF THE HALL, BUT THEATER PERSONNEL BLOCKED ENTRANCE, CITING FIRE REGULATIONS. TEMPERS FRAYED AND MATTERS QUICKLY ESCALATED. THEATER MANAGEMENT CALLED POLICE WHO REMOVED STUDENTS (MUSICIANS SAY "ROUGHLY," OTHER AMERICAN WITNESSES SAY POLICE BEHAVED MUCH AS THEY WOULD IN NEW YORK OR PARIS). AT THAT POINT MEHTA AND FLEISCHMANN GOT INTO SHOUTING MATCH WITH THEATER AND SOFIA CONCERT PERSONNEL AND THREATENED TO ABORT CONCERT UNLESS STUDENTS RELEASED AND ALLOWED TO ENTER HALL. WE ARE NOT SURE WHO MADE THE (UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES WISE) DECISION, BUT STUDENTS WERE RELEASED AND ABOUT FIFTEEN ALLOWED TO ENTER THROUGH BACKSTAGE ENTRANCE.

4. INCIDENT DELAYED SECOND HALF OF CONCERT BY ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES. IT WAS OBVIOUS TO THEATER AUDIENCE (AS IT MUST HAVE BEEN TO THOSE LISTENING TO LIVE BROADCAST VIA RADIO SOFIA) THAT SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED, PARTICULARLY SINCE MUSICIANS WHO WERE ON STAGE TUNING UP PICKED UP THEIR INSTRUMENTS AND WENT BACK OFFSTAGE DURING THE LONG PAUSE.

5. COMMENT: SOFIA CONCERT PEOPLE WERE CLEARLY VERY DISTRAUGHT SINCE THIS IS THE KIND OF INCIDENT WHICH CAN EASILY RUIN CAREERS HERE. OTHER BULGARIAN OFFICIALS MAY PERCEIVE THE EVENT AS A "PROVOCATION". THAT THE INCIDENT CAN AFFECT FUTURE US CULTURAL PROGRAMMING IN BULGARIA IS ALSO OBVIOUS. IN DAMAGE LIMITATION EFFORT, I AM TELEPHONING DIRECTOR OF SOFIA CONCERT TODAY TO SAY HOW SORRY I AM ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED. DEPT AND OTHER ADDRESSEES SHOULD NOTE LA TIMES REPORTER MURRAY SEEGER (WHO HAS JUST BEEN REFUSED CZECH ENTRY VISA) WAS BACKSTAGE AND OBSERVED ENTIRE INCIDENT.  
HERZ

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